

An Essay on Practice.

In selecting the title for this Essay, I have been guided by the nature of the
Relations of Pathology to Practice.
propose to treat, choosing first to

Respectfully Submitted
to the
mind, from which to fabricate a
Homoeopathic Medical College as
the essential character of this out-

line, of Pennsylvania,

On the first day of January
One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty;

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Doctorate in Medicine; the na-
ture of the following lines, he will un-

Ezra Leonard of New-York.

Relations of Pathology to Practice.

In selecting a title for this essay, I have been guided by the nature of the subject of which I propose to treat; choosing first to get an outline of my subject imprinted, so to speak, upon my mind, from which to fabricate a short title which will best express the essential character of this outline; rather than by first selecting a title, feel myself compelled to write with reference to a name merely.

Of the propriety of the above title, the reader must be the judge. If it should not clearly express the nature of the following lines, he will only see that I have not been guided by

a name as above stated.

It may be well to state that I do not propose to present any new facts or discoveries; for that would be a task far beyond my capacity even were I so disposed. But on the contrary, I shall take the subject just as it presents itself to my mind, with my present little knowledge of it; without the slightest attempt, or even disposition to hunt or ransack libraries with a view to better qualify myself for the task, and treat it according to my ability and circumstances, simply giving my own views and thoughts of the subject. For, should I attempt a research to obtain a better knowledge of the subject, one week, or one month would

not suffice to make me more competent for the work. Indeed, so do I view the subject, that I consider a long life, with a strong mind, spent in the prosecution of medical inquiry, insufficient to achieve any grand and striking improvement; but that it is reserved to the combined improvements of ages to effect such great results.

Pathology being that department of medical science which treats of disease, we must straightway infer, that a knowledge of it is essential to the practice of medicine. For without a knowledge of disease, no one should be supposed capable of removing it. But in order to arrive at a knowledge of disease, we must have a previous knowledge of what

is understood by the word health. Perhaps it is difficult to give a correct definition of health, as the word is generally used; and if so, the definition of disease must likewise be difficult. For, as before stated, the one cannot be understood without a knowledge of the other.

To show the difficulty of defining either health or disease, we find that the functions of different individuals are performed with various degrees of perfection, and yet most, if not all of them are considered healthy. One person may be very eccentric, or the functions of his mind may be performed in a very different manner from those of another who is said to be very even in his conduct, and yet both are supposed to enjoy health. Now if these individuals could each

exchange his manner for that of the other, both would be considered insane, or nearly so.

Does any living person enjoy absolute health? Or are not the causes and effects of disease to a greater or less extent lurking within the organisms of those who are supposed to be perfectly healthy? These interrogatories might afford interesting topics of speculation to those who are curiously disposed, but it is not my design or wish to enter upon the consideration of them on this occasion. In an individual that possesses perfect health, all the functions are performed in a normal easy manner. Having once arrived at a knowledge of that state which constitutes health, we immediately infer that any condition which differs from it must be disease.

fact. A disease is made up of several facts or parts, which taken together constitutes its existence. Thus there are remote, exciting, and proximate Causes; and the effects are functional and organic lesions, with diversified signs and symptoms. Now when several or all of these causes and effects are found to exist in one person, they constitute the disease under which he labors, and for which the physician must prescribe if he would make a skillful prescription. It is also evident that the greater the proportion of these separate parts of the disease taken into consideration by the physician in making his prescriptions, the more skillful and successful will be his practice, if there is any truth in medicine.

This leads me to another department of pathology essentially connected with the

practice of medicine - The pathogenesis, or diseases of medicine.

It strikes me then are two grand divisions of pathology with which the physician has to do - The pathology of morbid, and the pathology of remedial agents. And here I cannot resist the desire to quote in substance, what I conceive to be a most sublime and immutable truth, which fell from the lips of a distinguished professor of Materia Medica and Therapeutics in New York, in one of his lectures last winter.

Viz: All agents, whether morbid or remedial, produce injurious or beneficial results, only by virtue of the pathological conditions which they superinduce.

If we consider the relations of pathology to Allopathic practice, we shall

find them composed of a crude set of rules, whose exceptions are as frequent as their applications.

A physician may be never so well skilled in the pathology of diseases, and yet if he lack a knowledge of the pathology of medicines, he must necessarily fail of success in the practice of medicine. How often do we see eminent physicians stand by the bedside of a patient, fully acquainted with the pathology of the case, and wholly incapable of affording the slightest relief. Perhaps a better knowledge of the pathology of medicines might obviate the difficulty.

The effects of remedies upon the diseased organism must necessarily be

confused with those of the disease; and yet this is the chief method by which the effects of medicines have heretofore been ascertained.

When we consider the great uncertainty of Therapeutics as taught by the Allopathic or old school, it is not a matter of surprise that the Empiric or quack should so frequently be seen rivaling the most skillful physician. Therefore the value of a knowledge of pathology must be greatly reduced if it do not lead to a corresponding better method of treatment.

In the old school, pathology is chiefly valued as a guide to the general character and seat of the disease, by which the proper treatment is indicated.

in accordance with what are called the principles of medicine. These principles are based upon the fact, that a certain class of remedies produces a known effect on certain pathological conditions of the organism. Though even here, the cases which form the exceptions may be as frequent as those which constitute the rule.

Besides, there is a large proportion of diseases whose pathology is entirely beyond the reach of the most experienced and skillful physician; and in this class of diseases the treatment is empirical in the broadest sense of the term. In fact it is mere guess work. Here the alternative, or some other class of medicine is resorted

to, for the purpose of correcting a Cachectic or depraved habit as it is called; of removing a chronic debility, or subduing a morbid irritation. Hence, in these last diseases, that part of the pathology which is known, the Symptomatology, becomes entirely useless, except for the purpose of imagining some imaginary pathological condition of the organism, which will serve to explain the propriety of prescribing some favorite remedy; but which, in truth, has no real existence; unless it be in the imagination of its author.

In considering the relations which pathology sustains to the Homoeopathic, or new school practice, we meet with a striking difference in the importance

which is attached to its different branches by the old and new schools respectively.

That branch especially, which is denominated Symptomatology, seems to be cherished with peculiar importance by the new school; including all the less or ~~symptomatic~~ symptoms, and those sympathetic or symptomatic affections so called, which the old school physician regards with little or no importance. This difference of necessity grows out of the law or principle of practice upon which the new school is based; making the sum of all the symptoms constitute the disease in any given case.

Another branch of pathology is also held in greater reverence by the new, than by the old school physician.

I refer to the remote causes of disease. For instance, while the old school physician looks upon a chronic disease as simple, and uncomplicated, without the idea of any remote cause, the new school physician immediately attributes its origin to some other disease which had existed in the system perhaps many years before, and from which or its effects, the patient has never been perfectly free; the present chronic ^{disease} being considered as an expression or effect of the original disease which still continues to disturb the organism.

But as much, if not greater importance, is attached to the pathogenesis, or that branch of pathology which treats

of the diseases of medicine. In no one point perhaps, do the two schools differ more widely than in this. For while the new school carefully proves the pathogenesis of medicines by repeated doses on numerous and healthy persons, at the same time sedulously guarding themselves against the operation of any extraneous cause which might produce abnormal conditions of the organism and thereby render the proving incomplete, the old school gains its knowledge of pathogenesis chiefly in the sick room, upon diseased persons, and is therefore confounded with the symptoms of the disease.

If there is any ^{practical} utility in a knowledge of pathology and the pathogenesis of medicines; we would

conclude from the foregoing statements
that the new school practice ought to be
more successful, inasmuch as it enters
into a more minute consideration of
many of the branches of pathology.
But the success of this practice must
a fortiori be greater, if we suppose, as
is alleged, that its law of prescribing
medicines is the only certain curative
method. For it combines a clear
knowledge of the diseases produced by
morbific and remedial agents, with
the best rule of exciting medicinal dis-
eases for the cure of those caused by
morbific agents.

which In the old ^{practice} we hear a great deal
said in condemnation of the symp-
tomatical physician who prescribes

for symptoms without searching for the cause. If such a physician is to be deprecated in a system of practice where quackery stands nearly as high as skill in point of success, then a fortiori should the seal of condemnation pass upon the physician who is ignorant of pathology in the new practice, where knowledge is supposed to be a certain pledge of success.

It is true that the veriest tyro in medicine may sometimes remove disease in a plain case, especially if the symptoms be sufficiently marked to lead to the right remedy, which also corresponding to the hidden symptoms, effects the cure.

But in the majority of cases

his chances of finding the proper remedy are so much reduced, that his practice becomes little better than guess work.

Does the importance with which Symptomatology is regarded by the new school have a tendency to lead physicians into the habit of Symptomatical treatment? Should it have this effect, it will not render such treatment less fallacious, nor the opposite, careful and judicious treatment, less efficacious.